

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Child and Family Services Review

COLORADO

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses State performance during a specified time period with respect to seven child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being and with respect to seven systemic factors. The assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 cases from three counties in the State conducted during an onsite review the week of June 17- 21, 2002; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three counties and the State capital) with a wide range of stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, various levels of State and local DHS personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

A key finding of the review of Colorado’s child welfare programs is that the State achieved substantial conformity with Child Well-Being Outcome 2—Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs. Ninety-one percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved this outcome. The State also met the national standards for measures relating to repeat maltreatment, length of time to reunification, length of time to adoption, and stability of foster care placements. In addition, the following were rated to be areas of strength:

- Recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report (item 2).
- Providing services to families to protect children in their homes and prevent removal (item 3).
- Addressing the issue of risk of harm to children (item 4).
- Diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives (item 8).
- Placing children in close proximity to their biological families (item 11) and with their siblings (item 12) when possible and in the children's best interest.
- Diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources (item 15).

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with six of the seven safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The State also did not meet national standards for maltreatment of children in foster care and foster care re-entries. The most significant concern with regard to outcomes is the State’s inconsistency in achieving permanency for children in foster care. Stakeholders and reviewers noted that while the State has made gains in expediting permanency for children under age 6 through the Expedited Permanency Planning initiative, the same attention is not given to attaining permanency for older children in foster care. Permanency Outcome 1—Children have permanency and stability in their living situations—was found to be substantially achieved in only 52 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. Within this outcome, although the State’s data met the national standard for length of time to adoption, reviewers determined that only one of six adoption cases (17 percent) reviewed onsite was proceeding to finalization in a timely manner. In

the other five adoption cases, there were delays in achieving adoption, some of which were related to casework practices, rather than systemic barriers. Other items that were rated as Area Needing Improvement for this outcome were foster care re-entries (item 5), stability of foster care placement (item 6), permanency goal (item 7), and other planned permanent living arrangement (item 10).

Another area of concern related to Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 1—Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs. During the case review 60 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which included assessments of whether children and families received needed services (item 17) or were involved in case planning (item 18), and the frequency of caseworker visits with children and parents (items 19 and 20). The State also did not achieve substantial conformity with Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 3—Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs—with 61 percent of the cases reported to have substantially achieved that outcome.

With regard to performance on the systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State was in substantial conformity with factors related to the Statewide information system; quality assurance; training for child welfare staff and child caregivers; the array of services available to families; agency responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. However, the State was not in substantial conformity with the factor pertaining to the case review system. A key concern related to the State’s case review system was the finding that many parents are not involved in the case planning process, particularly fathers. Other key concerns relate to the timeliness of hearings for children in foster care, and the fact that the court does not have jurisdiction, by State law, to conduct permanency hearings for children in foster care following a commitment to the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC).

The following is a summary of the CFSR findings regarding specific outcomes and systemic factors.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. Although reviewers determined that this outcome had been substantially achieved in 89.5 percent of the cases, the State did not meet the national standard for maltreatment of children in foster care.

A general CFSR finding was that there is a low incidence of repeat maltreatment in Colorado. However, some concerns were identified in the area of responding to maltreatment reports in a timely manner. The key issue was that face-to-face contact is not always established in a timely manner, and that agency policy does not require face-to-face contact as part of initiating an investigation. In addition, the State did not meet the national standard with respect to

maltreatment of children in foster care. Stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the incidence of maltreatment in foster care may be attributed to the improper use of physical restraints in institutions. A summary of the findings for specific items assessed under this outcome is presented below.

Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 69 percent of the applicable cases reviewers found that the agency had initiated investigations of reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner, but there were concerns related to this issue in 31 percent of the applicable cases reviewed.

Item 2. Repeat maltreatment

Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Strength for the following reasons:

- The incidence of repeat maltreatment reported in the State Data Profile was 2.7 percent, which meets the national standard of 6.1 percent.
- There was no repeat maltreatment in any of the 38 applicable cases.

Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that maltreatment recurrence currently is not a problem in Colorado because of the availability of services and supports for families.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 82 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

A general CFSR finding was that for the most part, DHS made concerted efforts to maintain children safely in their homes and was effective in managing the risk of harm to children. Both of the indicators for this outcome were rated as Strengths. However, there was not a sufficient number of cases in which both items were rated as a Strength to attain the 90 percent requirement. A summary of the findings for specific items assessed under this outcome is presented below.

Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

Item 3 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 91 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes. The Statewide Assessment notes that the agency's core services and services offered through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program provide a range of services to prevent children's placement in out-of-home care.

Item 4. Risk of harm to child

Item 4 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because reviewers determined that in 87 percent of the cases, DHS made sufficient efforts to reduce risk of harm to children. Many stakeholders commenting on this issue suggested that the agency is very competent in managing

the risk of harm to children and noted that safety is a primary agency concern. Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that children are appropriately removed from their homes when necessary. A key concern, however, was that parents may not be receiving sufficient services after their children are removed to promote safe reunification.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Status of Permanency Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following:

- Although the State met the national standards for length of time to reunification and adoption and stability of foster care placements, the State did not meet the national standard for foster care re-entries.
- 52 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

In 86 percent of the cases reviewed, reviewers determined that the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives. However, a general CFSR finding was that DHS was not consistently effective in establishing appropriate permanency goals or achieving the permanency goal of adoption in a timely manner. Another key concern pertained to the use of the goal of long-term foster care leading to emancipation. Reviewers determined that for many of the cases with this goal, DHS had not made sufficient efforts to explore other permanency options such as adoption or guardianship before establishing the goal. A summary of findings for specific items assessed under this outcome is presented below.

Item 5. Foster care re-entries

Item 5 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 82 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that there were no re-entries into foster care within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. However, there were re-entries within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode in 18 percent of the applicable cases. In addition, data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's rate of re-entry into foster care within 12 months is 19.3 percent, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent.

Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 79 percent of applicable cases reviewers determined that children had placement stability and/or that placement changes were in the child's best interest. However, reviewers determined that in 21 percent of cases children did not have stability in their foster care placements. A key concern was lack of efforts to address the needs of foster parents experiencing problems with children in their care.

Item 7. Permanency goal for child

Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of foster care cases, reviewers determined that DHS had established appropriate permanency goals for children in a timely manner. However, concerns were identified regarding this issue in 28 percent of foster care cases. The major concerns identified were delays in changing a child's goal to adoption, a lack of concurrent planning efforts in at least one of the counties included in the onsite review, and a lack of consideration of the permanency goals of adoption or guardianship before establishing a goal of long-term foster care/emancipation.

Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the following:

- The State Data Profile indicates that the State's percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (85.7%) meets the national standard of 76.2 percent.
- In 86 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives.

Item 9. Adoption

Item 9 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 17 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. However reviewers identified unnecessary delays in attaining finalized adoptions in 83 percent of applicable cases. A key concern was that these delays were due to casework practices rather than to court-related or system-imposed barriers.

Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Item 10 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 56 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made diligent efforts to assist children in attaining the goal of emancipation. There were concerns related to this issue in 44 percent of applicable cases, primarily because reviewers determined that the children were not being adequately prepared for independent living.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Status of Permanency Outcome 2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 79.3 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. Although the State was not in substantial conformity for this outcome, there were areas of strength with respect to the agency's efforts to preserve the continuity of family relationships and connections for children. A key concern was inconsistency in agency efforts to promote visitation or bonding with fathers, as reflected in the ratings for items 13, 14, and 16. A summary of findings for specific items assessed relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement

Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 93 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children had been placed in foster care homes that were in close proximity to their parents or, when children were placed far away from parents, the placement was necessary to meet the children's special needs. This finding is consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment indicating that DHS makes every effort to comply with the Federal requirement that a child must be placed as close to home as possible.

Item 12. Placement with siblings

Item 12 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that, in 94 percent of the applicable cases, siblings were either placed together or there was a justifiable reason for their separation. Colorado enacted legislation in 2000 to ensure the placement of siblings in the same foster home.

Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 81 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS had made, or was making, concerted efforts to facilitate visitation. However, there were concerns related to this issue in 19 percent of applicable cases. A key concern was the inconsistency of DHS' efforts to promote visitation between children and their fathers.

Item 14. Preserving connections

Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of the foster care cases, reviewers determined that DHS made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections. However, there were concerns related to this issue in 28 percent of cases. In these cases, reviewers found that DHS had not made efforts to preserve children's connections to extended family, former foster parents, ethnic heritage, biological family, church, and/or friends.

Item 15. Relative placement

Item 15 was assigned an overall rating of Strength, because reviewers determined that the agency made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources in 88 percent of the cases. These efforts are facilitated by Colorado legislation requiring courts to order parents to identify relatives to be considered for placement. This usually occurs at the time of the temporary custody hearing.

Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents

Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 80 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS made efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care. However, concerns related to this issue were identified in 20 percent of applicable cases. A key concern for these cases was a lack of agency effort to promote children's relationship with their fathers.

III. WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome 1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 60 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity. A summary of findings for specific items assessed as relevant to this outcome is presented below.

Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 64 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the needs and services of children, parents, and/or foster parents had been, or were being, adequately addressed by DHS. However, there were concerns related to this issue in 36 percent of cases. A key concern was that, although the children received services, they still had critical service needs that were not being addressed by the agency. Reviewers determined that the unmet service needs were due to needs assessments that were not sufficiently comprehensive to identify underlying problems.

Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of the applicable case records, reviewers determined that DHS appropriately involved parents or children in the case planning process. However, concerns related to this issue were identified in 28 percent of the cases. The key concern noted was that children and fathers were not being involved in the process.

Item 19. Worker visits with child

Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 76 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency of caseworker visits with children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of their safety or otherwise meet their needs. There were concerns related to this issue in 24 percent of cases. Reviewers found that caseworkers did not visit children with sufficient frequency to meet their needs (20 percent), and/or caseworker visits did not focus on issues relevant to the case plan or achieving the child's permanency goal (16 percent).

Item 20. Worker visits with parents

This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 67 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that visits with parents were sufficiently frequent or of sufficient quality to promote the safety and well-being of the child or enhance attainment of case goals. Reviewers identified concerns related to this issue in 33 percent of cases, because visits were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of parents and children (22 percent), and/or visits did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (17 percent).

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Substantial Conformity

Colorado achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that 91 percent of the cases reviewed were found to

have substantially achieved this outcome, which meets the requirement for substantial conformity. A summary of findings for the specific item assessed for this outcome is presented below.

Item 21. Educational needs of the child.

Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because for 91 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that DHS was effective in meeting children's educational needs. Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that DHS is effective in ensuring that children's educational needs are addressed, and that accomplishing this requires a great deal of advocacy with the schools on the part of caseworkers and foster parents.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Status Of Well-Being Outcome 3 - Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. The outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 61 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

A general finding of the CFSR was that DHS is inconsistent in its efforts to address children's physical and mental health needs. For example, case reviewers determined that many children did not receive either routine preventive dental services or needed dental services. Stakeholders suggested that this problem might be due in part to delays in providing Medicaid cards and the lack of providers who will accept Medicaid payments. Reviewers also found that children's mental health needs were not being adequately assessed; when mental health services were recommended, DHS did not always follow up to ensure that children received these services. A summary of findings for the specific items assessed for this outcome is presented below.

Item 22. Physical health of the child

Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 77 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS adequately addressed children's health needs. However, reviewers determined that these needs were not adequately met in 23 percent of applicable cases. A key concern noted in these cases was that children did not receive a comprehensive health assessment at entry into foster care.

Item 23. Mental health of the child

Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. In 72 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that DHS adequately addressed children's mental health needs. However, in 28 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that mental health needs were not met. Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that DHS has not been consistently effective in addressing the mental health needs of children, either through assessment or services.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Status of Statewide Information System – Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with this factor.

Item 24. The State is operating a Statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

Item 24 was rated as a Strength because the State has the automated capacity to track the required information on children in foster care, such as the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity

Colorado is not in substantial conformity with the factor of Case Review System.

Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.

Item 25 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has requirements for developing case plans jointly with parents, the results of the onsite review and the survey of parents conducted by the Administrative Review Division (ARD) indicate that many parents are not involved in the case planning process, particularly fathers.

Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

Item 26 was rated as a Strength because the Department's ARD has a well-developed and structured process for ensuring that periodic reviews of children in foster care are conducted in a timely manner.

Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

Item 27 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because of concerns about the timeliness of conducting permanency hearings for children in foster care and concerns that the court does not conduct permanency hearings for children committed to the Department of Youth Corrections (DYC) who remain in foster care. Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that the 12-month permanency hearings are not being held in a timely manner.

Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Item 28 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. While the State has made notable gains in expediting permanency for children under age 6 through the Expedited Permanency Planning initiative, the onsite review did not find evidence that the same attention is given to termination of parental rights (TPR) for older children. The agency's attention to TPR is based on the age of the child, rather than the child's status or case circumstances.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

Item 29 is rated as a Strength because there are provisions in place to notify foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and related caregivers of hearings and reviews. The State's major strength in meeting this requirement is in providing notification of periodic reviews conducted by the ARD. However, although there are provisions in place to provide notification of court hearings, these are not implemented consistently.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Status of Quality Assurance System-Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with the factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.

Item 30 was rated as a Strength because the State has standards in place that appropriately address the safety and health of children in foster care. Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that the standards established by the State are comprehensive and relevant.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

Item 31 was rated as a Strength because DHS operates a comprehensive quality assurance system that 1) establishes desired outcomes and indicators for tracking performance, 2) produces performance data from case reviews and stakeholder surveys, and 3) uses the performance data for quality improvement processes.

VII. TRAINING

Status of Training-Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

Item 32 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because the State has a pre-service staff training program in place that addresses the skills and information needed for staff to perform their jobs. Most stakeholders commenting on this issue praised the training for new caseworkers and new supervisors.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because the State requires and supports ongoing staff training. For the most part, stakeholders indicated that DHS makes concerted efforts to provide training opportunities that will help staff build knowledge and skills.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

Item 34 is rated as an area needing improvement because of the issues concerning access to pre-service and ongoing training by foster parents.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Status of Service Array-Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with the factor of Service Array. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

Item 35 is rated as a Strength because the State has the necessary array of services in place to meet the needs of children and families. According to the Statewide Assessment, DHS has mandated a statewide set of core services. In addition to the core services program, Colorado's Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program is active in 34 counties and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation.

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.

Item 36 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because some services are not available in all of the rural areas. Families have to travel long distances in rural areas to access services.

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

Item 37 is rated as a Strength because the agency has the capacity to individualize services to children and families, although in some areas gaps in the service array affect this capacity to some extent.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Status of Agency Responsiveness To The Community- Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with the factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

Item 38 was rated as a Strength because the agency engages in extensive efforts to collaborate with other agencies and organizations, both locally and at the State level. According to the Statewide Assessment, Colorado's planning for the 2000-2004 CFSP included an extensive community consultation process to ensure the participation of a broad spectrum of public and private agencies, community-based organizations, parents and youth who have had past or present involvement with the child welfare system, as well as representation from culturally diverse populations.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered.

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because DHS consults with stakeholders on developing the IV-B plan.

Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because DHS is effective in its efforts to coordinate services with other agencies and organizations. Colorado has used Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funds to promote coordination across systems and has sponsored training and projects that involve the participation of providers from various agencies.

X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention-Substantial Conformity

Colorado is in substantial conformity with the factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings relevant to the specific items assessed for this outcome are presented below.

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and childcare institutions, which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the State has implemented the necessary standards for foster family homes and child care institutions.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

Item 42 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has the same standards for both related and non-related foster homes, it may waive the non-safety related standards for both related and non-related homes, while Federal policy only allows waivers of non-safety related requirements for related homes.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

Item 43 was rated as a Strength because the State complies with all Federal requirements for criminal background clearances. In 2001, Colorado passed legislation adopting language to assure full compliance with ASFA requirements for criminal records checks on foster and adoptive families. According to stakeholders, criminal background checks are completed for all foster parents.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Item 44 is rated as a Strength because there are a lot of ongoing efforts to recruit potential foster and adoptive families, some of which focus on recruitment of African American, Hispanic and Native American foster and adoptive parents.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the State has made concerted efforts to place children across jurisdictional boundaries, when appropriate. Stakeholders commenting on this issue reported that DHS actively participates in the Adoption Exchange and that it is not uncommon for Colorado children to be adopted across State lines.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Colorado. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 case records at three sites throughout the State conducted during an onsite review in the State during the week of June 17-21, 2002; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites) with State and local stakeholders including children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, school personnel, service providers, court personnel, legislators, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- 24 cases were reviewed in Denver County, 14 in El Paso County, and 12 in Morgan County.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 29 of the cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 21 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained in their homes).
- 7 of the 29 foster care cases and 1 of the in-home cases were juvenile justice cases.
- In 14 cases, all children in the family were Caucasian; in 7 cases, all children in the family were African American; in 17 cases, all children in the family were Hispanic; in 2 cases, all children in the family were Asian; and in 8 cases, the children were two or more races. In 2 cases, reviewers did not identify the race/ethnicity of the children.
- Of the 50 case records reviewed, the **primary** reasons for opening the child welfare agency case were the following:
 - Child’s behavior – 12 cases (24%)
 - Physical abuse – 10 cases (20%)
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 9 cases (18%)
 - Substance abuse by parent – 5 cases (10%)
 - Child in juvenile justice system – 4 cases (8%)
 - Mental/physical health of parent – 3 cases (6%)
 - Sexual abuse – 3 cases (6%) [In one case the child was the perpetrator.]
 - Abandonment – 1 case (2%)
 - Domestic violence in child’s home – 1 case (2%)
 - Other – 2 cases (4%)

- Among **all** reasons identified for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency, child's behavior was cited in 26 (52%) cases, neglect (not including medical neglect) was cited in 17 (34%) cases, physical abuse was cited in 16 (32%) cases, mental/physical health of the parent was cited in 14 (28%) cases, substance abuse by parents was cited in 12 (24%) cases, and domestic violence in the child's home was cited in 10 (20%) cases.
- For 13 of the 29 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in foster care during the entire period under review; for 11 of the 21 in-home services cases, the case was opened prior to the period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State's status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed for the outcome. The second section of the report provides a rating and a discussion for each systemic factor relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.